

Thoughts
on
Some Possibilities
for
Muslim-Jewish Dialogue



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By way of pointing to the commonality of our Source. Samaritan Jews at prayer on the Passover. These Jews claim that the way they pray was taught by Moses ~~✠~~. They prostrate themselves in the same way Muslims do. The Samaritans live according to the laws of the Torah contained in the first five books [*chumash*] of Moses ~~✠~~ Jews in Egypt. Morocco and the Yemen prostrated in prayer well into the recent past.

"And Ezra blessed the Lord, YahVeh, the Great Elohim, and all the people replied, "Amen, Amen," raising their hands and they bowed their heads and they prostrated to YahVeh with their noses to the earth." Nehemiah 8:6

Also read Nehemiah [Nechem Yah] 8:1-5.



Thoughts on Some Possibilities for Muslim-Jewish Dialogue

PRAISE BE TO ALLĀH, Lord of all the worlds, who, through His Eternal Word, does not cease to be praised: the Universally Compassionate, the Singularly Mercy Full, Who by His Mercy has stirred up within us gratitude for His Goodness, wherewith He has enriched us and inspired us to praise and glorify Him.

I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Prophet and Messenger of Allāh and I bear witness to the Prophethood of Adam, Idris, Nūḥ, Hud, Salih, Lūt, ʿIbrāhīm, Ismaʿil, Ishāq, Yaʿqūb, Yūsuf, Shuʿayb, Hārūn, Mūsā, Dawūd, Sulaymān, Ayyub, Dhū-l-Kifl, Yunus, Ilyās, al-Yasaʿ, Zakarriyah, Yahya, and ʿIsā bin Maryam¹, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon them all, and we do not discriminate between any one of them, for they are all related, each to the other.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ
أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا
وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ

QUL YĀĀ ʾAHLA-L-KITĀBI
TAʿĀLŪ ʾILĀ KALIMATIN SAWĀʾI BAYNANĀ WA BAYNAKUM:
ʾALLĀ NAʿBUDA ʾILLĀ-LLĀHA WA LĀ NUSHRIKA BIHI SHAYʾAN
WA LĀ YATAKHIDHĪ BAʿADUNĀ BAʿḌAN
ʾARBĀBAM-MIN DŪNI-LLĀH

Oh People of the Book

[Let us] come to an agreement between us and you
that we shall worship none but Allāh and ascribe no partner to Him
and none of us shall take as lords other than Allāh.

(Al ʿImrān 3:64)

This verse or sign [*ʾayat*] from the Qurʾān is an injunction that is binding upon all Muslims. We are told — nay commanded — to try to reach an agreement with the People of the Book, who are otherwise defined as the followers of earlier revelation meaning Christians, Sabians², and Jews.

The use in the above text of the Name “Allāh” means nothing more and nothing less than what may be understood as, “God”.

However, since the English word “God” can also be spelled “god”, it yields unfortunate derivatives such as gods, goddess, and goddesses. As such it is simply not the same at all as the word *Allāh*, which has neither root nor derivative, neither gender nor number.

The Name *Allāh* may appear strange to Jewish readers of this essay, so I have elected to spell it as G-d — which is to say

יהוה

as in:

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Hear oh Israel, YHWH, our G-d, YHWH [is] One

It may be argued that the particularist or exclusivist sentiments attached to that Name, so Holy it can not be properly written or pronounced, would prevent us from accepting that what we mean by the Name *Allāh* is the same as what is meant by:

יהוה

From an exclusivist standpoint, that Name simply refers to the tribal god of a particular people: the People of Yah or the Yahūd, the people who have repented [*hāda*] or who are guided [*huda*], a people who have lived in Palestine at various times throughout history.

But certainly in post-biblical, post-templar times we have come farther than being two tribes who share roots, both linguistic and patristic, arguing about what is, after all, the Unnamable.

The word in the verse or, more correctly, sign [*ʾāyat*] which is translated into English as “an agreement” [*kalimah*] may be also understood to mean “an equitable word” or “a common tenet” or, even, “a shared revelation”.

Certainly it is true that Muslims and Jews both share a belief in a book, and a “Book” moreover in which the One from whom revelation comes insists upon His Own Ultimate Singularity.



The desert dwellers [*bedu*] describe what is meant by that Naming of the Unnamable by telling this tale or one like it:

“A man and his wife were riding in the desert two days out from the last waterhole and three days forward to the next when a snake startled their camel, who shied and threw them.

The man hit the ground, broke his neck and died immediately. Simultaneously the camel ran away with all their baggage including the food and all the water.

The woman was left quite alone in the middle of the desert.

To Whom did she cry?

To Whom did she appeal?

Whom did she beg for mercy?

And Who was it that might even “hear” that plea?

Whoever or whatever that is, is what is meant by Allāh.”

Is that different than what is meant by?

יהוה

If either of us think that the Being to whom she cried is somehow different for a Muslim and a Jew, then it would be hard to imagine that there was any real possibility of sincere dialogue between a Muslim and a Jew.

If we can agree that we are talking about more or less the same Being, then I would say that the surest basis on which dialogue between Muslim and Jew can best proceed is on our common belief in the same G-d; One without an other, totally indivisible.

Let me make clear that I, as a practicing and, ³*inshallāh*, sincere Muslim, firmly believe, without any doubt attached to that belief, that the woman left alone in desert calling upon Allāh and, let us say, a Jewish woman who fell off her sleigh in the snows somewhere on the Russian border fleeing, perhaps, a

pogrom and, alone in that frozen waste, calling upon *Ha Shem* must necessarily be calling on One and the Same Being.

For in Truth there is no other to whom any of us can call in our hour of need nor has there ever been nor will there ever be.

When a Muslim reads the Torah, he or she finds so many parallels that there can be no real question of our shared beliefs and, indeed, their common origin.

For instance.

In Isaiah 44:6 we find:

“I am the first and I am the last and beside Me there is no G-d.”

In the Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:3 we find:

“He is the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner, and He is the Knower of all things.”

In Isaiah 46:9 we find:

“Remember the former things of old; for I am G-d and there is no one else. I am G-d and there is none like Me.”

In Sūrah Shūrā 42:11:

“Nothing is like Him. He is the Hearer, the Seer.”

or Sūra °Ikḥlās 112:1-5

“Say, He, G-d is One, G-d, eternally Self-sufficient. Neither begetting nor begotten — and no one is equal to Him.”

In Deuteronomy 32:39 we find:

“See now that I, even I, am He and there is no G-d with me. I kill and I make to live; I wound and I heal: nor is there anyone who can deliver from out of My Hand.”

Again in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd 57:2 we find:

“His is the Sovereignty of the Heavens and the Earth. He gives life and He gives death and He is Able to do all things.”

In Isaiah 46:9 we find:

“I, even I, am the Lord and beside Me there is no Savior.”

In Sūrah Ṭā Hā 20:14 we find:

“Surely I, even I, am G-d. There is no G-d save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance.”

In Isaiah 40:28 we find:

Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Everlasting G-d, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary.

In Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:255 we find:

"G-d. There is no G-d save Him. Neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth...."

In Micah 7:18-19 we find:

"Who is a god like You that pardons all sin and passes over the faults? He does not remain angry forever because He delights in mercy. He will turn [to us] over and over again and will have compassion upon us."

In Sūrah al-ʿAʿrāf 7:23 we find:

"They said, 'Our Lord, We have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us then surely we are lost.'"

...or in Sūrah al-ʿAnʿām 6:12:

"...He has prescribed Mercy upon Himself..."

...or in Sūrah al-ʿAʿrāf 7:156, where Moses ~~ؑ~~ asks,

"Will You destroy us for that which the ignorant among us did?⁴ It is but Your trial [of us].

"You send whom you choose astray and you guide whom You choose. You are our protecting Friend. Therefore forgive us and have mercy on us for You are the best who forgive. And give us in this world that which is good and [also] in the Final World. Surely we have turned to You in forgiveness. [And] He said, 'I smite with my punishment whomever I will but my Mercy embraces all things...'"⁵

In Sūrah Ṭa Hā 20:80-82 we find:

"Oh Children of Israel! We delivered you from your enemy, and We made a covenant with you on the side of the holy mountain.

"And We sent down manna and quail for you. Eat of the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress lest My wrath come upon you, for he on whom My wrath

comes is surely lost. And truly I am forgiving towards the one who repents and believes and does good and afterwards goes straight.”

Some orientalists hold that such parallels simply are a result of “borrowing”, whilst particularists and exclusivists among Jews, as well as many Christians, maintain that such correspondences or similarities are nothing but a form of plagiarism⁶.

As though G-d chose to speak with one side of the family and not the other.

However those who believe in, and are aware of the existence of revelation, prophecy and prophets *know* that it is not a question of borrowing or plagiarism but rather that revelation is a reality. They know that since G-d *is* One, what comes from G-d through the agency of prophecy and revelation must necessarily bear witness to the same Divine origin.

Since some people who may be reading this essay may not be familiar with what Muslims actually believe, let me list a few of the basic beliefs that Muslims, regardless of region of origin or school [*madhhab*] ,hold in common.

Some Common Beliefs of the Majority of Muslims:

G-d is One.

G-d is the Creator of man and woman and all of creation.

Both man and woman have a unique purpose in that creation.

G-d has clarified that purpose over time through Revelations to Prophets ﷺ which have been recorded in various Books including, but not limited⁷ to, the Torah, the Zabūr or the Psalms, the ʾInjil or Evangelists and the Qurʾān or the Recital.

These Revelations have been brought to the people through the Angels, who are beings of light, and through certain selected and chosen members of the human race formed of water, clay and spirit, called Prophets or Awakeners [*ʾanbiyā*], and Messengers [*rusul*] ﷺ.

These last — the Messengers or *Rusul* — have, besides the task of awakening the people around them from their deep unconscious sleep, the responsibility of delivering a revealed

message which contains the matrix of a specific religious way of life [*dīn*] which G-d has prescribed for human beings.

These are Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad ﷺ.

What they brought is called the Law⁸, otherwise known in Arabic as *shari'ah*, literally meaning “a broad path that leads to water”.

In accord with that Law, all human beings have a responsibility to actively worship G-d by submitting [*ʿistislām*] to the will of G-d by faithfully carrying out certain prescribed ritual practices and living their lives in submission [*ʿislām*] to G-d.

This way of life [*dīn*] may be at variance with the ways and customs of others among whom one lives. Nevertheless, the Order is the Order and our response is “we hear and we obey” [Q 2:285], however it may be that the world around us may view us, for it is a fundamental duty [*mitzva*] of the submitted one [*muslim*] to fulfill the Revealed Command(s) of G-d.

All human beings are responsible for both their intentions and their actions in accord with what G-d has revealed in the Law.

In that Law the parameters and boundaries of what is pure and thus permissible [*ḥalāl*], and what is impure and thus prohibited [*ḥaram*] are clearly defined and set out.

G-d has also revealed, both through revelation and through the behavior [*sunnah*] of the Awakeners and Messengers, the many shades and subtleties of personal, familial, tribal and communal modes of action [*muʿamalāt*] or behavior [*ʿaḳḥlaq*] that exist between the parameters of what is permissible and what is prohibited.

The Muslim also believes that all human beings will be judged by G-d on the basis of what they did with what they knew of the Truth that was made clear and revealed to them.

This judgment will take place at a time known only to G-d.

At that time all human beings will be resurrected in another body and gathered together in the Presence of G-d. They will, again in accord with what they knew and what they did with what they knew, be rewarded for the good that they did in this life by being granted an eternally blissful state known as

jannah, or the garden, or for the evil they did in this life by being punished with eternal suffering known as *nār*, or the fire.

From my own readings in Judaism I realize that, at least in pre-Babylonian Judaism, this last point is not one which we can exactly find agreement on as I understand that the question of immortality of the soul [*ar-rūḥ*] as such is not clearly addressed in Torah [*chumash*], and thus there is no doctrine in Biblical Judaism of an after life as such. Arguably, there are certain passages of Torah which point to at least the possibility of our bodily life in a dimension other than this world.

The most obvious reference is found in Genesis 3:23 where it is related in the story of the expulsion of Adam ﷺ that “G-d sent him out of the Garden of Eden to till the ground...and He fixed the angel at the east of the Garden of Eden, and the flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.”

In any case, with the possible exception of an active doctrine of the after life [*al-ʿākhirah*] in bodily form, it would seem that we hold many tenets of belief in common.

Beyond common beliefs is the obvious point of common ancestry. Of this G-d says:

Oh People of the Book!
[followers of an earlier revelation]
Why argue about Abraham
seeing that the Torah and the Injil were not revealed until after him?
Won't you use your intelligence?
You dispute about that of which you have some knowledge,
but why argue about what is unknown to you?
G-d knows and you don't.
Abraham was neither a Jew nor was he a Christian,
but he was one who had turned himself away from all that is false
and surrendered himself to G-d;
and he was not from among those who worship a plurality of gods.
(ʿAl ʿImrān 3:65-67)

This verse [ʿāyat] of the Qurʾān may seem strange to a Jewish reader who views Abraham as the founder of Judaism, but for the Muslim it points to Abraham ﷺ as the universal man, the Father of Believers (Genesis 17:5) and the Friend of G-d (2 Chronicles 17:5), and surrender [ʿislām] to G-d as the Way.

Abraham is commonly called the father of the three monotheistic religions, but from the Islamic perspective, he himself was in actuality the founder of the proto-religion [*dīnu-l-ḥunafā*] named in the Qurʾān the “Millata ʾIbrāhīmīya” or the Creed of Abraham (Q2:135). Those who practiced this creed were known as the Ḥunafā [sing. *ḥanīfah*].

The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam says that, “Abraham represents the primordial man in universal surrender to the Divine Reality before its fragmentation into religions separated from each other by differences in form.” As such, “The religion of Abraham is a reconsecration, a restoration of the primordial ‘norm’ [*al-fiṭrah*], a spontaneous and sacred conformity to reality that is not externalised — and thus necessarily reduced — to the level of law.”⁹

This dīn al-ḥunafā was, *par excellence*, the ur-monotheism, for Abraham ﷺ was, as is made very clear in Qurʾān, not an idolater but, on the contrary, a practitioner of the original and primordial semitic unitarianism [*tawḥīd*] of the self-surrendered [*muslimūn*].¹⁰

And it is upon this fiṭrah that our mutual faith [*dīn*] is formed.

As for the events of his life, Muslims and Jews also share the threads of a common story of his destruction of the idols, of his migrations, of his wives and his relatives, of the visit of the angels, of the destruction of the cities by the salt sea, of the sons he was granted late in life, and, above all, of his willingness to sacrifice his son at what he believed to be the command of G-d and the merciful substitution which G-d granted. We also share in his supplications for all those faithful ones from his seed who would come after him.

All of this represents our common patrimony, even if we necessarily view events from a different perspective.

Different in the sense that, whilst Torah is more purely narrative, Qurʾān is illustrative and assumes the reader’s familiarity with the stories of the prophets ﷺ in order to understand the example [*mithāl*] that G-d places before us. And also different because, though we are seed of the same father, we are each of us the ‘children’ of a different son.

From the more than sixty places that Abraham ﷺ appears in the Qurʾān, a many faceted picture emerges of the prophet and the man who was both chosen and who chose to be chosen.

Who is better in religion than the one
who surrenders his entire purpose to G-d, and does his best,
and follows the creed of Abraham
who turned away from all that was false?
And G-d took Abraham as a friend.
(an-Nisāʾ 4:125)

I would like to touch briefly on the crucial story of the sacrifice of his son which is so important to both Muslims and Jews.

When Abraham ﷺ was on one of his periodic visits to Makkah he saw in a dream that he was slaughtering his son ʿIsa .

And when [his son] was old enough to work with, [Abraham] said,
“Oh my son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you,
so look, what is your view?”
[His son] said,
“Oh my father. Do what you are ordered.
By the Will of G-d you shall find me steadfast.”
And when they had both submitted he laid him face down.
(aṣ-Ṣaffat 37:103)

And as Abraham ﷺ moved the knife toward the neck of his son the Angel Gabriel ﷺ, on the orders of G-d, stayed his hand and replaced his son with a ram. Whereupon G-d called out, “Oh Abraham! You have fulfilled your vision; truly do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice and left the people of later times [saying], “Peace be upon Abraham.” [37:104-109]

In the *Body of Faith*¹¹ by M. Wyschogrod I was deeply struck by the author’s understanding that there is no cheap grace, no redemption in the midst of an unredeemed world. To be near G-d is to become a friend of death because of the terrible danger that surrounds all intimacy with G-d.

The author writes, “The original sacrifice to which all subsequent sacrifice points is the sacrifice of man before God. More specifically, it is the sacrifice of Isaac¹² who is Abraham’s promised son of his old age, the son through whom his seed

will become a great nation. At this point of the origins of God's love for Abraham, the love from which all later love for the Jewish people is derived, the principle is laid down that to be loved by God requires the willingness to accept death at the hand of God. The choice of Abraham to carry out this deed roots it in Israel's deepest experience of fatherhood. The hand of the father that is stretched out to take the life of the son is thus deeply engraved in Israel's consciousness. There are those who maintain that the significant feature of the Isaac sacrifice narrative is God's intervention, which made the carrying out of the sacrifice unnecessary and thus abolished human sacrifice for all time. But this is a rationalistic misunderstanding of the worst kind...The divine intervention that saves Isaac is presented as an undeserved act of divine grace neither Abraham or Isaac had any right to expect and from which it can clearly not be inferred that God in any way lacked the right to demand the sacrifice that He did. Jewish consciousness did not infer from this episode that the ethical in some way rules independently and therefore serves to check God's arbitrary demands, but rather it deduced a model of human behavior definable as obedience. But it is a very special kind of obedience that is here to be found. Both Abraham and Isaac are obedient, one to the command of God and the other to that of his earthly father. Just as Abraham obeys God, so does Isaac obey his father. And both trust Him whom they obey. The obedience is not based on terror but on love. It is as if both knew that they are loved by Him who demands and therefore nothing bad can come of it...Isaac is so certain of his father's commitment to him that nothing can shake this certainty, not even the outstretched hand holding the sharp knife."

A celebration [*ʿīd*] of this sacrifice, albeit told from the perspective of the children of Ibrāhīm's ﷺ first-born son, Ishmael ﷺ, is observed yearly during the rites of the Pilgrimage [*hajj*] which commemorate the time when Abraham ﷺ came to Makkah for the coming of age of Ishmael ﷺ who was dwelling with his mother Hagar in "the wilderness of Paran" [Genesis 21:21]. Many Muslims believe that it was there he received the dream [*ruya*⁹] from Allāh ordering him to sacrifice his son.

In both forms in which this story is told the point remains sharp and tantalizingly present for generation after generation of those who have learned to live with that bright shining knife.

And in our discussion with one another on the subject of the sacrifice of sons, we must not forget those who claim spiritual kinship through what they believe was a later sacrifice of a much beloved son for whom there was no substitution. They too are involved in our story.

It is the depth of the story of Abraham and his children and the all but endless repercussions and reverberations of that story reaching to this very minute (I am writing this on the fifteenth of May 2000 C.E.) that have bound together the seed of Abraham throughout time to the Biblical reality not only of the past but also of the present moment.

Those without a Book have no way of knowing these stories which drive the actual unfolding of events both in time and space; thus they never really know what is happening.

The Qurʾān, like the Torah, exists, and indeed lives, in all times. The many similar stories and parables they contain are not stories of something that happened in the past but what is always happening somewhere here in the present.

A. A. Cohen in his book, *The Tremendum*,¹³ remarks on this, saying, "The Passover Haggadah commands that every Jew consider himself as though he had gone forth in exodus out of Egypt. The grammatical authority of the Haggadah makes clear that this is no metaphor, whatever our wish to make apodictic language metaphoric. The authority is clear: I was really, even if not literally present in Egypt and really, if not literally present at Sinai."

Similarly we would say that not only were we present at Sinai but, at some level, Sinai is present in every here and now as is all that is contained in the Book, for it is by means of the Word that sacred history reaches us as "on a boat connecting the different worlds."

In this realm of Biblical Judaism and Qurʾānic ʿIslām many avenues of discussion may be opened between Muslims and Jews if both are open to the understanding of what we may

think of as “multiple right answers”, and are imbued with the knowledge of how the stories of Abraham, or Ishmael or Isaac, or Jacob and his sons or Joseph and his brothers, of Moses and Aaron ~~✠~~, are stories of captivity, exile, slavery, wandering and return, that continue to play out in time and eternity.

The basket in which Moses floats is the divine Word through which he himself is preserved from the flux of historical time. Pharaoh’s wish to slay the children of Israel was to forever drown them in the waters of secular one-dimensional history, so that only those who conform to the norm of a world which does not wish to know it is in exile should survive.

H. Corbin in *Temple and Contemplation*¹⁴ remarks, “Whoever does not free himself from the norm which recognises only the historical, which acknowledges as true only that which is in time and the documents of history, will never understand that what hierohistory recounts in the Revelation on Mount Sinai is not an event which only took place in, let us say, the year 2499 after the Creation. The Revelation on Sinai dwells intemporally within the human being, within every Moses who has been saved from the waters. For this reason it is no less true to say that the Revelation on Sinai also exists before the beginning of the world.”

Exile in Egypt, the plague, the parting of the sea, the years of wandering in the wilderness, the coming into the land, aren’t just tales of past events; but there is in truth a wilderness in which we wander in the present just as there is an Egypt where we live in exile and a land which is our true home.

If this can be understood, many other things can be understood, *if* there is a will to understand. I must confess, in this instance, I am not overly optimistic except, perhaps, in the realm of intimate personal dialogue between secure believers who can see through to the common Source of our differing beliefs.

As I reviewed a number of books on Judaism in preparing this essay I sensed that some of the authors found certain parallels between Islam and Judaism, especially in the relationship between Sufism and Kabballah. Others were prepared to acknowledge that Islam has had some influence on Jewish

customs and traditions where Muslims and Jews have lived together for long periods. Yet, overall, the basic attitude of Jews towards dialogue seems to be one of indifference.

Indeed one author I came across simply said that, "Discussion [about religion] with Gentiles is likely to be a waste of time and Jews are advised to abstain. Frankness in particular could easily lead to injured feelings; there are plenty of things that are better left unsaid."¹⁵

At that risk of injuring feelings I must say that, even with a will to understand each other and even with a desire to find some commonalty, a major obstacle presently remains in our way.

This obstacle to understanding is the prevailing injustice existing today in the Holy Land. It is clear from this, as we have seen in our discussion of hiero-historical realities, that our life together is a continuation in the present of an old story which has been greatly exacerbated by people with other agendas.

Muslims find it difficult to understand why, when the ultimate safe haven from the depredations of the Christian Europeans, be they Orthodox, Roman or Protestant, was always the Muslim world, Jews in the present time seem to have forgotten that this has been the historical reality over the centuries¹⁶.

That we will never see truly eye to eye has always been true. What else is new? But surely indifference in the embrace of Dar al-Islam under the imperative of *darchai shalom* must be preferable to life lived amidst the waves of madness that periodically sweep Christendom; now the putative friend of Israel, in its historical drive to kill Jews, individually or wholesale, or, if not to kill them, then to forcibly convert or exile them.

Jews, for religious reasons related to the laws regarding inter-marriage, will always be a minority among the peoples of the world. The Holy Land itself is a tiny place in space; a sliver of land in the *jaziratu-l-ʿarabiyah* which itself is an island in the vast and varied sea of the Muslim world.

As a result of "official" policies on both sides, a generation of young people in the Holy Land is being brought up to hate and with hatred — on both sides. This cannot lead to good for any of the believers and it cannot remain a matter of indifference as

we both understand from the many tragic events that affect so many of our families — and there is not one family on either side that remains untouched by what has happened.

Surely in the 5,760 plus years of the recorded history of the Children of Israel the cyclical process whereby the oppressed becomes the oppressor and the oppressor is in turn oppressed is evident despite the cry, “never again”.

It would be wise to for everyone to remember the inscription on the ring of Solomon ﷺ: “This too shall pass.”

For this reason alone we cannot remain indifferent to finding roads of possible understanding or, at least, dialogue between us if not for our own sake then for the sake of our children and the unborn. For this reason, if no other, I pray that we may find these roads to possible understanding and, if nothing else, that we can at least keep talking to one another.

We know that Jews recognise that among the *goyim* there exist the *Chasidei Umot Ha-olam*. Just so we Muslims are told,

“They are not all alike. Of the People of the Book there are upright people who recite the revelations of G-d throughout the night, and prostrate themselves.

“They believe in G-d and in the Final Day, and enjoin the doing of what is good and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and they vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous.

“And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward of it for G-d has full knowledge of those who guard themselves from evil for His sake.” [Q3:113-115]

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

WA BASHṢHĪRI-L-LADḥĪNA ʾĀMANŪ WA ʿAMILŪ-Ṣ-ṢĀLIḤĀT

And give good news to those who believe and perform righteous deeds.

(al-Baqarah 2:25)

والله أعلم

Allāh Knows best

¹Adam, Idris, Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Jethro, Aaron, Moses, David, Solomon, Job, Elijah or Ezekiel, Jonah, Elias, Elijah, Zakariyyah, John and Jesus, the son of Miriam.

²Derived from the Aramaic, *tsebha*^c, meaning “immersed in water”. Referring to followers of John the Baptist [*Yahya* ﷺ] or, perhaps, to militant messianists who lived in pre-diaspora communities like Qumran.

³*inshallāh* = Allāh willing or *b'ezrat yirtzeh ha-Shem*

⁴for worshipping the golden calf.

⁵This quote occurs after the incident of the golden calf when Moses ﷺ is asking G-d to forgive the children of Israel for their transgression.

⁶For instance Michael Asheri in his “Living Jewish” (Everest House, New York, 1978) writes, “This concept of a unique and indivisible God is also held by Moslems and Christian Unitarians both of whom got it from Jews.”

⁷According to statements [*ḥadīth*] made by the Prophet ﷺ there have been 124,000 books sent to humanity. In the present time we only know with surety the names of Torah, Zabūr, ^oInjil and Qur^oān.

⁸*shari*^cah = [approximately] *halakah*

⁹*The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Cyril ^cAbdu-l-Wahīd Glassé, Harpers Collins, New York 1984.

¹⁰*salām* = he surrendered. *salima* = to be safe and sound, unharmed, secure. ^o*islām* = submission to the will of G-d. *muslim* = one who submits to G-d. Thus submission to G-d, done in any part of the world in any age, by any people, if truly done, is ^o*Islām*, which is an Arabic word meaning submission. The one who has submitted to G-d is a Muslim.

¹¹*The Body of Faith; Judaism as Corporeal Election*, M. Wyschogrod, The Seabury Press, New York 1983.

¹²Most Muslims believe that the story is of the sacrifice of Ishmael ﷺ rather than Isaac ﷺ but the “point” of the tale is much the same for both Muslim and Jew. The name of the son is not mentioned in the Qur^oān so the point is left open. Again we stress that the Qur^oān is not so much narrative as it is illustrative of certain key principles and paradigms that G-d wishes to convey to human beings.

¹³*The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust*, A. A. Cohen, Crossroad, NY 1981.

¹⁴*Temple and Contemplation*, H. Corbin, Islamic Publications, London, 1986.

¹⁵*Living Jewish*, Michael Asheri, Everest House, New York 1978.

¹⁶For Jews living in the old Czarist Russia a prized possession was an Ottoman passport. Similarly the Maghrib [Morocco], Alexandria, and the Yemen, as well as other areas of the Muslim world including Damascus, Baghdad and Persia, were historically places of refuge for Jews on the run.

